AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1. - 33. (Canceled)

Claim 34. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing ~~the~~a metal or metal oxide porous material comprising rod-shaped crystals of a metal or metal oxide, which form an open framework architecture, thereby forming a sponge-like material, ~~of claims 24 or 25,~~ which comprises:

preparing an aqueous viscous solution of a water-soluble metal salt and dextran ~~metal or metal oxide salt material and dextran or a highly water soluble carbohydrate polymer~~;

allowing said aqueous viscous solution to self-solidify to form a solid ~~matter~~; and

baking said solid ~~matter~~.

Claim 35. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing ~~the~~a metal or metal oxide porous material comprising rod-shaped crystals of a metal or metal oxide, which form an open framework architecture, thereby forming a sponge-like material ~~of claim 33~~, which comprises:

preparing an aqueous viscous solution of at least two kinds of water-soluble metal salts each having different metal elements, and dextran ~~metal or metal oxide salt material, dextran or a highly water soluble carbohydrate polymer, and a different type of metal or metal oxide salt material~~;

allowing said aqueous viscous solution to self-solidify to form a solid ~~matter~~; and

baking said solid ~~matter~~.

Claim 36. (Canceled)

Claim 37. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, wherein the baking process is carried out at a temperature of not less than 500°C.

Claim 38. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein the baking

process is carried out at a temperature in a range from not less than 500°C up to 900°C.

Claim 39. (Canceled)

Claim 40. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 34, wherein dextran ~~or the carbohydrate polymer~~ in the aqueous viscous solution has a concentration in the range of 10 to 80% by weight and the water-soluble metal salt ~~the metal, metal oxide salt material, or colloidal metal oxide~~ has a concentration in the range of 10 to 90% by weight.

Claim 41. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 40, wherein the water-soluble metal salt ~~the metal, metal oxide salt material, or colloidal metal oxide~~ has a concentration in the range of 15 to 60% by weight.

Claim 42. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 36, wherein dextran ~~or the carbohydrate polymer~~ in the aqueous viscous solution has a molecular weight in the range of 10,000 to 500,000.

Claim 43. - 46. (Canceled)

Claim 47. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein the metal or metal oxide porous material is a soft or hard sponge-like material.

Claim 48. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein the cross-sectional width of the rod-shaped crystal, taken in a direction perpendicular to the length, is from 1 μm to 50 μm.

Claim 49. (New) The method according to claim 34, wherein the metal element of the water-soluble metal salt is selected from the group consisting of noble metals and transition metals.

Claim 50. (New) The method according to claim 49, wherein the noble metal is silver or gold.